

I thank the gentlelady from Illinois for reserving this time to take the message out. For a moment, let me speak to the 103,000 Medicare beneficiaries in the 12th Congressional District in New Jersey, more than 100,000. This legislation would improve their benefits. It would provide free preventive and wellness care. It would improve the primary care and better coordination of care, not just so there is more efficiency and less waste, although there would be, but so that patients don't get the runaround. It does not help their health to have unnecessary or counterproductive tests or procedures. It would enhance nursing home care. And it would strengthen the Medicare Trust Fund, extending solvency for another 8 or 9 years. That is real.

You had spoken earlier about the doughnut hole. I always hesitate to talk about the doughnut hole. I think of it as a cliff. Depending on how expensive your monthly medication is, along about August or September or October, you have exceeded the expenditure limit on Medicare, the way things stand now, and you fall off the cliff. And if you want to keep taking the medicines, you have got to pay out of pocket.

Under the bill, the beneficiaries not only would receive in 2010 a \$250 rebate and 50 percent discounts on brand-name drugs beginning in the coming year, but also complete closure of this doughnut hole, or better yet, filling in this cliff in the years to come. A typical beneficiary who enters the so-called doughnut hole, again, that is too benign a term, who falls off the cliff, will see savings of over \$700 in the coming year and over \$3,000 in coming years. So this is something that, yes, it helps small businesses. Yes, it helps young adults trying to get a start after college. Yes, it helps people who find themselves between jobs or people who want to start small businesses. It helps employees of large businesses. It helps anybody who has a health insurance policy now. But tonight, we are talking about how it will help senior Americans.

I thank the gentlelady for reserving this time. Let me turn it back to you, and I will add some comments as we go along if I may.